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PESTICIDE PRESENCE / RESIDUE STUDY PLAN ON FRESH PRODUCE ADVERTISED AS “ORGANIC” To be sampled from supermarkets in Los Angeles County

Executive Summary

At the direction of the Board of Supervisors upon approval of the motion introduced by 5th District Supervisor Michael Antonovich, the Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures Environmental Toxicology Laboratory (Tox Lab) will conduct a study of fresh fruits and vegetables marketed as “organic” and offered for sale at supermarkets throughout the county. Analyses of randomly selected produce samples will be performed to identify the presence or absence of specific compounds and to determine the general compliance by producers of fresh produce marketed as “organic” with regulations prohibiting the use of specific pesticides.

Background

In this small-scale study, Tox Lab personnel will randomly select two (2) samples of vegetables advertised as “organic” and one (1) sample of fruit advertised as “organic” from five (5) supermarkets located within each of the five Districts of Los Angeles County (i.e., fifteen samples from each District). Each of the seventy-five (75) samples will be tested by the Tox Lab through “Multi-Residue Screening of Pesticides” for presence of the following:

- Organophosphorus Pesticides (OP): consisting of 64 compounds (See Appendix I)
- Organohalogen Pesticide (CH): consisting of 64 compounds (See Appendix II)
- Carbamate Pesticides (CB): consisting of 15 compounds (See Appendix III)
- Pyrethroid Pesticides (PY): consisting of 11 compounds (See Appendix IV)

Instrumentation

The following instruments will be employed to detect compound concentrations:

- Gas Chromatography / Nitrogen Phosphorus Detector
- Gas Chromatography / Electron Capture Detector
- High Pressure Liquid Chromatography / Fluorescence Detector
- Gas Chromatography / Mass Spectrometer

Certification

The ACWM Environmental Toxicology Laboratory has not been certified to perform pesticide residue testing of fresh fruits and vegetables since 2004. Prior to initiating this study, the Tox Lab must acquire certification from the California Department of Health Services (CDHS), involving acquisition of a proficiency test (PT) kit consisting of samples of unknown identity which must be accurately analyzed and identified. CDHS routinely prepares such samples for proficiency testing of numerous laboratories in February of each year, at a cost of approximately \$2,000 per kit. Such kits can be made available at this time, but the cost is anticipated to be approximately \$4500, as this will necessitate a special preparation to accommodate the ACWM Tox Lab.

To complete the testing to acquire certification, approximately two weeks of full-time effort by the Tox Lab will be required once the PT kit is received.

Analyses of Produce Samples

Tox Lab personnel estimate an ability to conduct analyses of 4 to 5 samples per day. Three laboratory staff members will be required to suspend other routine activities to work full-time on the pesticide residue testing. An ambitious estimate for completion of testing is 3 to 4 weeks.

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
ORGANIC PRODUCE STUDY
- PROPOSED BUDGET -**

Seventy-five (75) samples will be tested for presence of any compound(s) within four major groups of pesticides, within which are one-hundred fifty-four (154) chemical compounds. Such analysis is described as “Multi-Residue Screening of Pesticides.”

Estimated costs of analyses:

- Purchase of Chemical Compound Standards = \$10,780.00

(NOTE: As the Tox Lab has not performed such analyses for over 5 years, the related standards have expired and new standard sets must be acquired.)

a. Average Cost Per-Standard: \$35.00

b. Total Compounds: 154 2 X 154 X \$35 = \$10,780

c. Sets of Standards: 2

- Solvents and Reagents: = \$ 1,500.00

- Glassware and Sample Containers: = \$ 2,000.00

- Sample Work-Up and Supplies: = \$ 3,000.00

(Gas Chromatography/Liquid Chromatography components suffer severe wear under such tests, requiring replacement)

- Costs of recertification process: = \$ 4,500.00

Total approximate costs of analyses = \$21,780.00

Estimated costs of purchasing and collecting produce samples:

75 samples X \$10 / sample = \$ 750.00

1 employee X 5 days X 102.26/day = \$ 511.30

1 Vehicle X 5 days X 150 miles/day X \$0.515/mile = \$ 386.25

Total approximate costs of produce sample collection: = \$ 897.55

Total Proposed Budget for Organic Produce Study: = \$22,677.55



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 713, Los Angeles, California 90012
(213) 974-1101
<http://ceo.lacounty.gov>

WILLIAM T FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer

January 27, 2010

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

ORGANIC PRODUCE TESTING STATUS REPORT (ITEM NO. 66-C, AGENDA OF JULY 21, 2009)

On July 21, 2009, in a motion submitted by Supervisor Antonovich, your Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (ACWM) to conduct a study of organic foods in local supermarkets to test whether or not they are in fact organic and to report back to the Board with the results of the study. This is the first status report on this motion.

In order to conduct the study, ACWM needed to obtain certification from the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) to perform residue testing on fresh fruits and vegetables. At the time the motion was approved, ACWM did not have this certification. Following the recent successful completion of a Performance Evaluation Test administered by the CDHS, ACWM received certification to test fresh fruits and vegetables. ACWM is now in the process of developing sampling and testing parameters to be used in the study. Testing is expected to commence on February 1, 2010, for a period of approximately four weeks. Following the completion of the testing period, the CEO and ACWM will report back to the Board with the results of the study.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me or your staff can contact Deputy Chief Executive Officer Brence Culp, Public Safety Cluster, at (213) 893-2374.

WTF:BC:SW
DC:cc

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors ✓
County Counsel
Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures

Board Motion 66C.Bm.1-26-10.Docx

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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
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MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
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Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

June 24, 2010

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "W. T. Fujioka", is written over the printed name of the Chief Executive Officer.

ORGANIC PRODUCE TESTING STATUS REPORT (ITEM 66-C, AGENDA OF JULY 21, 2009)

On July 21, 2009, your Board adopted a motion directing the Chief Executive Office (CEO) and the Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (ACWM) to conduct a study of foods identified as organic in local supermarkets to test whether or not they are organic, and to report back to the Board with the results of the study.

This report is in response to the aforementioned motion and provides the results of the requested study, as well as the sampling technique and testing methodology that were employed.

Background

In order to conduct the study, ACWM had to obtain certification from the California Department of Health Services to perform pesticide residue testing on fresh fruits and vegetables. Additionally, to achieve certification, ACWM had to acquire multiple reagents to conduct specific analyses as well as a Proficiency Test Kit from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Such test kits are prepared by CDPH only at intermittent intervals to facilitate certification of labs throughout the State and, in this instance, were available only in the fourth quarter of the calendar year.

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ACWM Environmental Toxicology Laboratory (ETL) staff conducted analyses on four separate samples within the kit, the contents of which were known to CDPH but not to ACWM. Each sample required testing for a minimum of seven to a maximum of 27 compounds. All tests were conducted between November 16 and December 4, 2009. The final results were submitted to CDPH on December 4, 2009, and were found to meet the required proficiency levels. On January 4, 2010, ACWM received certification to test fresh fruits and vegetables for pesticide residues. The above required processes resulted in the delay in satisfying the Board motion, as addressed in the status report submitted by our office on January 27, 2010.

Sample Collection and Testing

The word organic encompasses a broad spectrum of practices, including the methods by which farmers grow, process, and handle agricultural and livestock products. The National Organic Program (Program), a Federal program governing organic food that is enforced by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), as well as the CDPH, includes provisions pertaining to the production and handling requirements of produce and livestock as well as labeling and marketing of those items as part of its regulatory framework. For the purposes of this study, the focus was on the testing of produce items for the presence of synthetic pesticides that are strictly regulated under the Program.

To collect a representative array of samples for the testing process, ACWM randomly selected five supermarkets in each of the five Supervisorial districts offering organically grown produce as an option to customers (Attachment A). From each supermarket, approximately one pound of the following items identified as organic was selected for testing, totaling 75 items: apples, tomatoes, and lettuce. These items were selected for their wide availability so as to create consistency during the screening process. The collection process commenced on March 4, 2010, and was completed on April 13, 2010.

The collected samples were tested by ACWM's ETL using a multi-residue screening process employed by CDFA for the screening of produce to detect pesticides. All 75 samples were tested for the presence of compounds within four major groups of pesticides: organophosphorus pesticides, organohalogen pesticides, carbamate pesticides, and pyrethroid pesticides.

Each Supervisor
June 24, 2010
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Results/Conclusion

All samples were evaluated for the presence of any targeted pesticides to the respective Reporting Limit levels for each pesticide group, which is the lowest level that the laboratory's technology may detect. Such reporting limit levels are well below the applicable, allowable Maximum Contaminant Level for each pesticide as established by the CDFA and applied to fruits and vegetables for consumption. All analyses conducted upon each of the produce samples, which were analyzed for detectable levels of all compounds within the four pesticide groups, resulted in findings of No Detection in any of the chosen samples.

Based on these results, it is safe to conclude that the apples, tomatoes, and lettuce that are being advertised as organic at the supermarkets selected for this study do indeed meet Federal and State regulations and standards set forth regarding pesticides and organic produce. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or your staff may contact Deputy Chief Executive Officer Jacqueline White, Public Safety, at (213) 893-2374.

WTF:BC:JW
SW:DC:cc

Attachment

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
 County Counsel
 Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures

Organic Produce Testing
Supermarkets Selected By Supervisorial District

Attachment A

First District

Ralphs,
645 W. 9th St.
Los Angeles

Vons,
804 W. Beverly Blvd,
Montebello

Fresh & Easy,
8921 Washington Blvd,
Pico Rivera

Vons,
350 N. Lemon Ave,
Walnut

Albertsons,
2469 Via Campo St,
Montebello

Second District

Ralphs,
S. Sepulveda Blvd.
Los Angeles

Pavillions,
11030 Jefferson Blvd,
Culver City

Vons
1260 Redondo Beach,
Gardena

Vons
500 E. Manchester Blvd,
Inglewood

Trader Joe's
9290 Culver Blvd,
Culver City

Third District

Vons
17380 Sunset Blvd.
Pacific Palisades

Bristol Farms
9039. Beverly Blvd,
West Hollywood

Gelsons
22277 Mulholland Dr.,
Calabasas

Whole Foods
1934 Rinaldi St,
Northridge

Gelsons
4520 Van Nuys Blvd,
Sherman Oaks

Fourth District

Albertson's
1234 Diamond Bar Blvd.
Diamond Bar

Ralph's
20137 Pioneer Blvd,
Lakewood

Bristol Farms
1570 Rosecrans Ave,
Manhattan Beach

Trader Joe's
19720 Hawthorne Blvd,
Torrance

Whole Foods
6550 E. PCH,
Long Beach

Fifth District

Vons
3027 Rancho Vista Blvd.
Palmdale

Whole Foods
24130 Valencia Blvd,
Santa Clarita

Ralphs
521 Foothill Blvd,
La Canada

Bristol Farms
605 Fair Oaks Ave,
South Pasadena

Trader Joe's
475 W. Foothill Blvd,
Claremont